

**Top Secret** 219

(Security Classification)

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Friday 17 March 1978

CG NIDC 78/063C

**NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION**  
Unauthorized Disclosure Subject to Criminal Sanctions

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DIA review(s)

State Dept. review

**Top Secret**  
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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Friday, 17 March 1978.

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The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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## SYRIA - MIDDLE EAST: Reactions

25X1 [ ] The Israeli incursion into Lebanon has won the enthusiastic support of the press and populace. Prime Minister Begin, whose popular support was eroding, is being credited with taking strong, decisive action. He is almost certain to try to turn this to his advantage during his talks next week in Washington.

25X1 [ ] The Israeli occupation of the buffer zone raises serious problems for Syrian President Asad; all reports indicate that Asad wants to avoid a direct military confrontation with Israel. Egyptian President Sadat has condemned the Israeli attack.

25X1 [ ] The US Embassy in Tel Aviv notes that a mood approaching war fever had developed in Israel prior to the incursion into southern Lebanon; Israelis now have a sense of relief and pride. The opposition Labor Party has rallied firmly behind the government. Former Foreign Minister Allon, a prominent Labor Party leader, has endorsed the government's intention to keep forces in southern Lebanon until an agreement is worked out that bars the return of the Palestinian guerrillas.

25X1 [ ] Secure at home and banking on an upsurge in sympathy for Israel in the US, Begin probably believes that he will be in a stronger position than earlier to discuss his differences with the US over the settlements question and UN Security Council Resolution 242.

25X1 [ ] The Israeli actions this week place Syrian President Asad in a serious political predicament. Asad has invested much of his prestige in recent years in projecting Syria as the protector of the Palestinians as well as the defender of Lebanon. Syria's failure to act against the Israelis has called into question both claims.

25X1 [ ] The Iraqi and Egyptian media have already taunted Asad for standing by idly. Syria will try to fend off such charges by accusing Egypt of acquiescing in Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon, but the pressure will mount on Asad to do something. Syria's public promise to provide air cover for Lebanon reflects Asad's recognition of the need to demonstrate Syrian resolve.

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[redacted] So far, all reports indicate that Asad wants to avoid a direct military confrontation with Israel. [redacted]

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[redacted] Asad will probably encourage the Palestinians, especially Syrian-controlled Saiga forces, to hold their positions between the Syrian forces in central Lebanon and the Israelis. [redacted]

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[redacted] Syria's demarche to the members of the UN Security Council reflects Asad's desire to solidify international opposition to an Israeli-occupied buffer zone. The Syrians are aware that the Lebanese Army is incapable of assuming a security role in the south and that the Israelis will not withdraw unless the Palestinians are kept away from the border.

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[redacted] In the past, the Syrians have resisted efforts to establish a UN peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon; they believe that such a force would infringe on their preeminent position in Lebanon. Asad nonetheless would probably now find a UN force more palatable than a continued Israeli presence. Without publicly endorsing such an arrangement, he may tacitly encourage the Lebanese to pursue it.

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[redacted] President Sadat yesterday joined other Arab leaders in condemning Israel's attack. He emphasized that Israel can obtain its security goals only by solving the Palestinian problem, not by force of arms. Sadat vowed to continue his search for peace.

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[redacted] Other Egyptian officials and the media yesterday sharply criticized Israel but the Egyptians continue to treat Israel as a potential partner in shaping peace.

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[redacted] The Egyptian media used Israel's raid as an occasion to attack the USSR and Syria, which were ridiculed for their faint-hearted reactions. The US received little attention. Egypt clearly expects the US to condemn the Israeli action and to lead diplomatic efforts to secure Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon. [redacted]

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## CUBA-ETHIOPIA: Castro Speech

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[ ] In his first public statements on the subject of Ethiopia since the Somali withdrawal, Cuban President Fidel Castro gave no indication that Cuba intends to withdraw any of its forces from Ethiopia soon. Castro did not refer to US demands that Cuba withdraw its troops and kept his criticism of the US to a minimum.

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[ ] In an apparent effort to ease popular concerns, Castro emphasized that the war is over and implied that the combat role of the Cuban troops is essentially finished. In an allusion to the possibility of continued guerrilla activity by the Somalis, however, the Cuban leader warned that Ethiopia's pledge not to cross the border into Somalia was conditioned on Somalia ceasing its aggression against Ethiopia.

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[ ] A similar linkage was made in the Cuban press on Tuesday, and senior Cuban officials have told the US Interests Section in Havana that if Somali President Siad continued to threaten Ethiopia, the possibility of "positive gestures" such as troop withdrawals would be eliminated.

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[ ] Castro's remarks gave no clear indication of the assistance Havana might give Ethiopia in dealing with the Eritreans. [ ]

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[ ] It seems likely, however, that the Cubans will provide a limited amount of assistance in an effort to help force the insurgents to the bargaining table.

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[ ] Castro made no reference to US demands that Cuba withdraw its troops from Ethiopia. Last week, however, Armed Forces Minister Raul Castro harshly attacked efforts by US "spokesmen" to deny Cuba the right to help countries like Ethiopia. The younger Castro's remarks were probably intended to demonstrate that, if any reduction of Cuban forces does occur, Havana is not acting at the behest of Washington.

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## SUDAN: Eritrean Concerns

25X1 [ ] //Sudanese Defense Minister Ali on Wednesday told Ambassador Bergus that he believes the Ethiopians, backed by the Soviets, will inevitably attack the Eritrean guerrillas near the Sudanese border and perhaps even inside Sudan. A Sudanese deputy chief of operations, in a talk the same day with the US defense attache, made similar remarks and said Sudan is reinforcing its eastern border in anticipation that the bulk of Ethiopian, Cuban, and Soviet personnel will be transferred to Eritrea and gain the upper hand over the guerrillas. He predicted that the Eritreans would seek sanctuary in Sudan and that the Ethiopians would cross the border in hot pursuit. He asserted that the Sudanese would fight if the Ethiopians penetrate into Sudan beyond a certain point.//

25X1 [ ] //The officer, who may have presented his worse-case scenario, urged the US to accelerate the delivery of F-5s to help Sudan prepare to meet the threat. The Sudanese also believe the Soviets intend to use Ethiopia as a base from which they can work to undermine Presidents Numayri of Sudan and Sadat of Egypt.//

25X1 [ ] Numayri has continued to allow arms for the guerrillas to transit Sudan but believes the best solution would be a negotiated settlement granting the Eritreans autonomy. He has attempted to improve relations with Ethiopia and to mediate between the two sides.

25X1 [ ] A senior Ethiopian official visited Khartoum this week; a Sudanese envoy will visit Addis Ababa soon to prepare for the visit of Sudanese First Vice President Ibrahim. Sudanese involvement with the Eritrean guerrillas and the presence of Sudanese dissidents inside Ethiopia remain the major obstacles to overcoming the two countries' differences.

25X1 [ ] Numayri's efforts to mediate between the Eritrean insurgents and the Ethiopian Government have been stymied by guerrilla factionalism and the refusal of either Ethiopia or the guerrillas to consider a compromise solution.

25X1 [ ] If forced to make a choice between abandoning the Eritreans or sacrificing relations with Ethiopia, Numayri would probably opt to continue supporting the Eritreans. A Sudanese

[redacted]

sellout of the guerrillas would arouse the anger of almost all Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia, a principal source of financial aid to the Sudanese. [redacted]

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#### SOUTH AFRICA - NAMIBIA: Buildup

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[redacted] //According to the US and UK defense attaches, there are indications that the South Africans are forming a highly mobile military strike force that may be intended for use against guerrilla bases in southern Angola. The attaches estimate the force could be ready in two weeks. According to the US Embassy in Pretoria, the focus and timing of the operation are not clear; the South Africans may be planning a substantial reinforcement of their troops in the northern sector of Namibia in order to deter the South-West Africa People's Organization from increasing guerrilla incursions whenever a preindependence election date is announced.//

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[redacted] //The odds now appear at least even that shortly after Parliament returns from its Easter recess on 29 March, Prime Minister Vorster will announce a date for an election to be held with or without a truce with SWAPO or UN participation in the election process. Although Vorster may assert that South Africa wants to continue settlement talks, he probably expects SWAPO's exiled leaders to call upon SWAPO supporters inside Namibia to boycott and disrupt an election. The South African Government has recently publicized an alleged SWAPO contingency plan for stepping up guerrilla attacks from southern Angola if an election is held in the absence of a truce.//

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[redacted] //According to the US and UK defense attaches, military and civilian observers in South Africa are reporting unusual Air Force activity and military security arrangements.//

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[redacted] //A reliable source of the US Embassy in Pretoria reports that some personnel of the Citizen Force, South Africa's ready reserve, have been called to active duty this month. The US consular office in Pretoria confirms there has been an unusual callup that led to complaints from the parents of some reservists. [redacted]

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[redacted] another report from an Embassy source suggests some medical students were activated.//

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[redacted] //In addition, a US military attache reports increased air activity this week at a key Air Force base near Pretoria. A senior officer at the base told him the Air Force is training to fly military transport aircraft in low-level formation maneuvers, a technique associated with paradrop operations. The Air Force officer added that the transports were also being armed with cannon to serve in a gunship role. Both the transports and the bombers at the base were said to be practicing night operations, apparently on a priority basis.//

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[redacted] //The South Africans have also increased security around the air base by placing armored cars along the perimeter and posting 24-hour guards, and they have improved security arrangements at a major supply and helicopter base. [redacted]

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## ECUADOR: Campaign Developments

25X1 [ ] *Plans for the Ecuadorean presidential election in July are still on track, but three strong candidates are now in the race and it is unlikely that any will get the required majority. This would necessitate a runoff between the two top contenders within two months of the initial round.*

25X1 [ ] The Concentration of Popular Forces, the political vehicle of populist Assad Bucaram, has chosen its deputy leader, Jaime Roldos, as its standard bearer; Bucaram was disqualified as a candidate last month. Roldos will face two strong contenders--Conservative Sixto Duran-Ballen and Radical Liberal

[REDACTED]

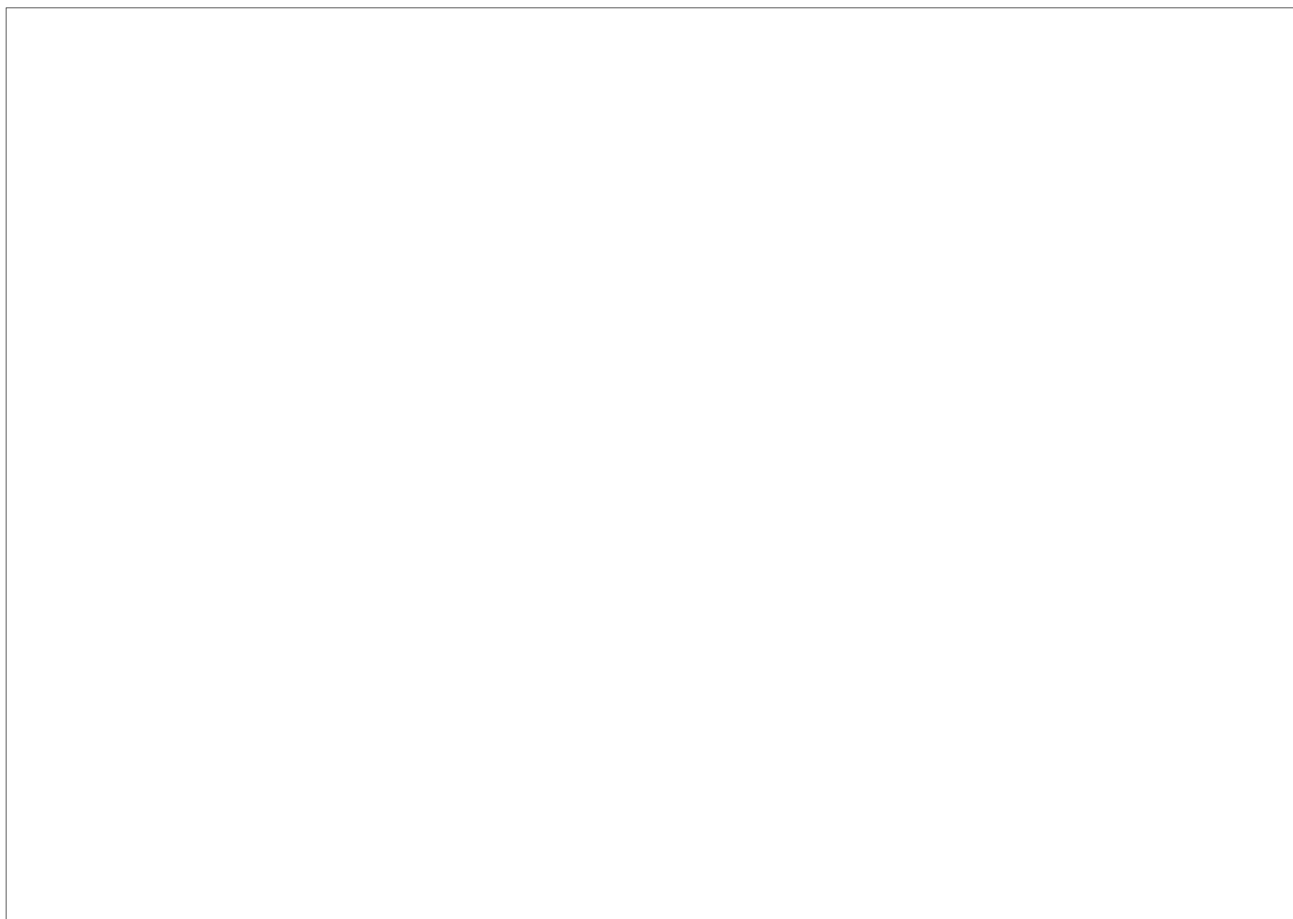
Francisco Huerta. Roldos' entry into the race followed an unsuccessful attempt by his party to forge an alliance with Huerta's party, which would have created a potent center-left coalition.

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[REDACTED] The Concentration of Popular Forces is an intensely personalistic party, and it is unclear how much of Bucaram's populist appeal will rub off on Roldos. Still, Roldos has picked up the support of a smaller center-left political grouping and will be a strong contender with Huerta for Ecuador's large center-left constituency, particularly in the populous coastal region. Duran-Ballen, who has the behind-the-scenes backing of the military government, appears assured of the support of conservative political forces. [REDACTED]

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## BRIEFS

## Canada

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[REDACTED] //A Canadian firm has ordered from a US manufacturer 20,000 kilometers of high-quality optical fiber. This may be the largest order yet placed in the area of fiber-optical communications. The firm expects delivery over the next two years.//

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[REDACTED] //This order indicates that large-scale implementation of fiber-optical communications will take place sooner than expected. Other countries have demonstration and



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[redacted]

test systems, but the Canadian firm's order suggests that it believes fiber-optical technology can soon become cost competitive with alternative technologies.//

25X1 [redacted] //The Canadians will probably use a large portion of the optical fiber on order for a trunk line in Alberta Province. It may also be used for a cable television system in Ontario and for communications and monitoring systems for hydro-electric power stations in Manitoba and Newfoundland. [redacted]

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East Germany

25X1 [redacted] The East German party daily *Neues Deutschland* announced on Tuesday that the party has appointed Joachim Herrmann, chief editor of the paper, as Central Committee secretary for agitation and propaganda. Herrmann will relinquish his editorial role.

25X1 [redacted] Heretofore a Central Committee secretary without a specific portfolio, Herrmann replaces Werner Lamberz, who was killed in a helicopter crash on 6 March.

25X1 [redacted] Herrmann is one of the many proteges of state and party chief Honecker who have moved into key positions since Honecker became party leader in 1971. His appointment indicates that Honecker is still in command and that the previous balance in the leadership will be maintained. The two men apparently developed a close relationship during the 1950s when Honecker was head of the party youth organization and Herrmann was editor of its newspaper. Herrmann was elected to full membership in the Central Committee in 1971 and became a candidate Politburo member in 1973. [redacted]

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Ecuador

25X1 [redacted] //The first of Ecuador's two diesel submarines, purchased from West Germany, arrived in the port of Guayaquil last Friday. The other has completed sea trials and will be ready for delivery within the next few months. Training requirements for the submarine crews are demanding, and the boats will probably not be combat-ready for many months.//



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[redacted] //The submarine purchase is part of the navy's long-term modernization plan. Ecuador recently acquired three missile patrol boats from West Germany and is attempting to buy additional coastal patrol craft in Western Europe.//

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[redacted] //The Navy still lacks the larger ships needed to pose a credible deterrent to the Peruvian fleet, which is the main concern of Ecuador's naval planners. [redacted]

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